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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 07 PRETORIA 004790

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA'S UN SECURITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

REF: PRETORIA 4540

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Classified By: Ambassador Eric M. Bost. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

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SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION  
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¶1. (C) Post-apartheid South Africa begins its first stint as a non-permanent UNSC member on 01 January with an ambitious agenda. The SAG naturally will promote its "Africa agenda" and will seek to keep the Council focused on efforts to resolve the continent's conflicts. But, South Africa also can be expected to engage actively on high-profile issues like Iran, North Korea and the Middle East, on special interests such as Haiti, and on broader themes like proliferation/disarmament, UN reform, and peacebuilding. South Africa will be a responsible, independent, and sometimes forceful voice on the Council as a self-proclaimed champion of the developing world. However, Pretoria may be hard pressed to balance the conflicting expectations of its developing and developed country audiences as it auditions for a permanent UNSC seat.

¶2. (C) Ultimately, SAG policy on issues of direct national interest will be pragmatic, while questions of little practical relevance to South Africans may be treated more ideologically. Here's where we expect South Africa to fall on the issues listed above:

-- Iran: Stubbornly insisting there is no "smoking gun" proving a nuclear weapons program, South Africa will maneuver to avoid imposition of sanctions and steadfastly defend Tehran's right to "peaceful" uses of nuclear energy. If forced to a vote on compliance with UNSCR 1696, however, Pretoria will be loathe to undercut the Council and will likely vote based on the facts or abstain.

-- North Korea: Despite fundamental opposition to sanctions, the SAG is much more open to stern international measures following the DPRK's nuclear test.

-- Middle East: Pretoria has strong historic sympathies for

the Palestinian cause, but is open to arguments about the need for balance in resolution texts.

-- Haiti: South Africa's position has shifted in recent months to coincide more closely with U.S. interests, from supporting Aristide (who still lives in Pretoria) to backing the elected Preval regime.

-- Nonproliferation: The SAG will be an outspoken and active nonproliferation advocate, but will criticize weapons states for shirking NPT disarmament obligations.

-- UN Reform: South Africa is interested in UN reform, although we will disagree on specifics. Their main focus, however is Security Council expansion (to include South Africa).

-- Peacebuilding: With peacekeepers in a range of African trouble spots, the SAG is convinced of the importance of post-conflict reconstruction and consequently is intrigued by the UN Peacebuilding Commission concept.

**¶3.** (C) While we anticipate some disagreements on hot button issues like the Middle East and Iran, the United States and South Africa share fundamental values, including a commitment to democracy, free markets, human rights, the rule of law, and tolerance. This offers a strong basis for cooperation and dialogue. We recommend high-level engagement on Security Council issues of mutual interest, early consultations and regular information sharing to facilitate SAG decision-making processes, and emphasis on U.S. support for multilateralism and South African priorities to ward off knee-jerk "North-South" ideological misperceptions. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

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SOUTH AFRICAN UNSC PRIORITIES/STRATEGIES

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**¶4.** (C) Africa Agenda: South Africa's top priority during

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its two-year stint on the UN Security Council will be to promote its "African agenda," which largely means focusing resources and attention on preventing and resolving Africa's conflicts. In his seven years as President, Thabo Mbeki has devoted enormous personal effort and national resources to African conflict resolution, trusting that stability will be transformational -- leading to development and growth across the continent. Mbeki is an Africanist at heart, believing that slavery, colonialism, the Cold War, and now an "unjust" international order have restrained the continent from realizing its potential. His ambitious "African Renaissance" and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) projects are designed to shift the debate on the continent's future and lay the groundwork for stability, better governance, and development. Even as the ANC's internal succession battle intensifies in advance of national elections in 2009, we believe Mbeki will continue to promote his Africa initiatives, which he hopes will define his legacy.

**¶5.** (C) Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Complementing its African agenda, South Africa is increasingly convinced of the importance of post-conflict reconstruction, in part because the countries where the SAG has focused the most attention (DRC and Burundi) are now entering the rebuilding phase. With the ANC confident of carrying a significant proportion of the electorate through at least 2014, the SAG takes a long-term approach to this transformational process and encourages partners to do the same. Mbeki criticized the international community October 31 for focusing too much on conflict resolution, and not "going all the way to ensure countries emerging from conflict do not revert to violence." Pretoria will seek ways to use its Council seat to encourage greater international consensus, action, and long-term commitments on post-conflict issues. In this vein, South

Africa has been interested in discussions on developing a UN Peacebuilding Commission.

¶6. (C) Voice for the South?: As the outgoing Chair of the G-77 and a recent NAM Chair, South Africa views itself as a spokesperson for the "South" and will consider itself obligated to use its Council seat to promote a greater voice for the developing world in international institutions. South Africa constantly points to the "power imbalances" in international organizations and strongly supports comprehensive UN reform, including an expanded Security Council (read: one with a South African permanent seat). FM Dlamini-Zuma even suggested October 19 that the UNSC veto should be eliminated because it is "undemocratic." On the other hand, South Africa has sophisticated commercial and trade interests and a history of pragmatic decision-making on issues of national importance. SAG policy will be strongly pro-South where ideological and national interests overlap, such as promoting African peace and prosperity or halting WMD proliferation. But interests are likely to trump ideology where the two collide, no matter the rhetoric.

¶7. (C) Nonproliferation and Disarmament: As one of the few countries to end voluntarily its nuclear weapons program, South Africa carries significant moral weight on nuclear issues. Pretoria is a strong and active voice on the IAEA Board of Governors and will chair the Nuclear Suppliers Group for 2007-2008. The SAG consistently underscores its fundamental support for the NPT, and argues that the international community (particularly the United States) has focused too much attention on nonproliferation to the exclusion of the Treaty's disarmament objectives. South Africa's vocal support for the peaceful use of nuclear energy is about both the principle of protecting developing countries' rights and South African commercial interest in developing Pebble Bed Modular Reactor technologies. The SAG is playing an expanding role on the conventional side as well. It became the first African state to join Wassenaar last year and maintains a continuing interest in controlling proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the continent.

¶8. (C) Dialogue, Not Sanctions: South Africa will be reluctant to support the imposition of UN Chapter VII sanctions despite the vital role international sanctions played in effectively opposing the apartheid regime. SAG officials argue that dialogue is (nearly always) preferable to pressure, and they rarely acknowledge that sticks and carrots can work together to promote change. Pretoria has

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profound faith that if two sides talk enough -- like the ANC did with the National Party -- a peaceful, negotiated agreement is possible. The South African leadership prides itself on being open to dialogue with absolutely everyone.

¶9. (C) A Talented Multilateral Tactician: Although new to the Security Council environment, the SAG contains a number of leaders who worked the apartheid-era sanctions and understand how the game is played. South Africa's natural preference is for consensus decision-making and Pretoria takes pride in helping to broker compromise, particularly between developed and developing countries. The working levels have been honing their multilateral diplomacy skills in a variety of organizations for the past decade. Generally, SAG representatives are capable and committed to finding mutually acceptable solutions no matter how difficult the issue. They will be up front about their own redlines (almost always defined in terms of "principle") and will consider creative tactics to avoid confrontation. When it suits their interests, the SAG argues that certain functional or regional organizations have "primary jurisdiction" over key issues. For example, Pretoria has argued that discussions of Iran should be confined to the IAEA, not the UNSC. On Cote d'Ivoire, it recently objected to a draft French resolution because it purportedly conflicted with the

AU Peace and Security Council resolution on the same issue. The SAG Achilles' heel is a bureaucracy plagued by capacity shortcomings resulting from apartheid's lingering effects, which may impede timely decision-making and communication with New York.

¶10. (C) Permanent Seat: Perhaps most importantly, South Africa hopes to use its non-permanent seat to lay the groundwork for eventual permanent membership on the Council. Pretoria will try to prove to various audiences -- AU members, the "South," contenders from other regions, the P-5, the Secretary General, and the UN bureaucracy -- that it is a serious candidate deserving international support. Its African rivals for the Council seat, particularly Nigeria, will be watching with interest how Pretoria plays its cards.

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COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ISSUES  
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North Korea

¶11. (S) True to its belief in dialogue, South Africa continues to engage with the DPRK, albeit cautiously. Trade is negligible between the two countries, but several high-level visits were exchanged over the past 18 months and North Korea opened an Embassy in Pretoria just this year. The SAG is careful to follow a public line clearly emphasizing the primacy of the six-party talks and to consult with the parties before major visits. Prior to the DPRK's nuclear test, South Africa had opposed sanctions or other direct UNSC involvement, instead advocating further diplomatic efforts to bring North Korea into the international mainstream. Since the test, Pretoria's profound commitment to nonproliferation has caused South Africa to make a deliberate exception to its no-sanctions policy, while still keeping the door open for further dialogue.

Iran

¶12. (C) Despite being an NPT "true believer" and the global poster child for nuclear disarmament, South Africa has a blind spot where Iran is concerned. Arguably motivated by some combination of apartheid-era loyalties, current energy dependence, NAM relationships, an instinctive predisposition toward the underdog, and fear of a potentially escalating crisis, South Africa has taken a deeply unhelpful position on Iran's nuclear weapons program. At the IAEA Board of Governors and in other fora, the SAG has been all "carrot." It gives legitimacy to Iran's arguments by maintaining there is no "smoking gun" proving the existence of a nuclear weapons program. It stresses nations' rights to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It downplays Iran's lack of cooperation. Senior SAG officials meet regularly and

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publicly with the Iranian leadership.

¶13. (S/NF) While Pretoria appears increasingly uncomfortable with Tehran's behavior and rhetoric, it will be difficult for South Africa to reverse its long-standing position without admitting a massive error in judgment and simultaneously risking Tehran's wrath. If UNSC dynamics provide an opening for a face-saving SAG policy reversal, it is worth considering when and how that leverage might be most effectively deployed. Post believes that South Africa's general opposition to sanctions will place it in the Chinese and Russian camp if that option is considered. However, if asked to vote on a resolution detailing Iranian noncompliance with UNSCR 1696, South Africa likely will vote the facts, or at worst abstain. Pretoria may voice concerns about the implications of 1696, but South Africa respects international

law and will obey it to the letter.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

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¶14. (C) South Africa will press to keep the UN deeply involved in the DRC, including the continuation of a robust peacekeeping force for some time. The DRC is the SAG's number one Africa priority. Mbeki believes that the success of the current transition in Congo will transform the entire continent. South Africa has significant commercial interests in the DRC in the telecommunications, mining, and energy sectors, and it hopes to expand these investments.

¶15. (SBU) South Africa played a key role in the DRC peace negotiations, which led to the signing of the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement in Pretoria in December 2002, and currently has 1,206 troops deployed as part of MONUC. It also has been deeply involved in security sector reform, collaborating with the Netherlands and Belgium, and its Independent Electoral Commission provided extensive support for the recent DRC elections. South African ministries have a range of partnership programs in the DRC, from police training to civil service reform.

Middle East

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¶16. (C) South Africa will push to keep the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Lebanese conflicts on the Council agenda. The African National Congress (ANC) remains strongly sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, from the ANC's days as a liberation movement. South Africa consistently and publicly condemns Israeli military operations in the West Bank, Gaza, and Lebanon. Deputy FM Pahad reiterated as recently as November 8 that the UNSC failure to protect civilians in Gaza "only serves to weaken their credibility and confidence in the Security Council."

¶17. (C) While South Africa is consistently critical of Israeli actions, it attempts to maintain a semblance of balance on Middle East issues. The South African Government refused to sever ties with the Government of Israel during the recent Lebanon crisis, despite strong pressure from key constituencies, including the trade union federation COSATU and the South African Communist Party. Like many transition countries, South Africa has toyed with playing an (informal) mediation role in the Middle East.

Sudan

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¶18. (C) In Darfur, South Africa supports the transition from AMIS to a UN peacekeeping force, although not against the will of Khartoum. South Africa has 398 peacekeepers and 126 civilian police serving in AMIS. South Africa has publicly committed several times, most recently on November 17, to send additional troops to AMIS. While the political will to deploy more troops exists, the South African military is overstretched in the DRC and Burundi, and would have difficulty sending significant numbers of additional troops to Darfur.

¶19. (SBU) South African diplomats have expressed concern

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that the international focus on Darfur has deflected attention from implementation of the North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which remains South Africa's primary focus in Sudan. South Africa chairs the AU Post-Conflict Ministerial Committee on the Sudan, which is charged with developing plans for post-conflict reconstruction in southern Sudan (although it has

accomplished little). Pretoria plans to open a consulate in Juba and has funded a \$3 million training program for Government of South Sudan/Sudan People's Liberation Movement officials, focused largely on building capacity in public administration and finance.

Cote d'Ivoire

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¶20. (C) South Africa will remain an active participant in Cote d'Ivoire, arguing for focused UN attention on elections and disarmament. The SAG may argue against the imposition of additional sanctions (at least on President Gbagbo's camp). President Mbeki stepped down as the AU's Cote d'Ivoire mediator in October, following a turbulent and largely ineffective two years as the AU point person. Mbeki said that he was withdrawing because South Africa's membership on the UNSC might conflict with its AU mandate on Cote d'Ivoire.

Many analysts believe that ECOWAS pressured Mbeki to relinquish his mediator role, a theory supported by the fact that no SAG concerns have been expressed about potential conflicts of interest in other trouble spots.

¶21. (C) Originally appointed by then-AU Chairman Olusegun Obasanjo in November 2004, Mbeki successfully negotiated the Pretoria Agreement in April 2005, which in theory resolved the major electoral and disarmament issues. The agreement, however, was never implemented, and over time, South Africa became increasingly perceived as biased toward President Gbagbo's position. The New Forces rebels repeatedly asked Mbeki to step down as mediator. The SAG has had a small number of troops deployed in Cote d'Ivoire since 2005 and also trained approximately 135 troops to provide close protection for Ivoirian Ministers.

Burundi

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¶22. (C) Although the ONUB mission in Burundi ends December 31, South Africa will continue to push for active UNSC support for the Burundi peace process and post-conflict reconstruction. South Africa, under the leadership of former President Nelson Mandela, led the negotiations of the Arusha peace accords in August 2000, and has worked tirelessly to keep the peace process on track. South Africa deployed its own troops in October 2001 to oversee the return of Burundian rebels. That mission was later subsumed by the African Union peacekeeping force in May 2003 (AMIB) and the UN in June 2004 (ONUB).

¶23. (SBU) South African Minister for Safety and Security Charles Nqakula continues to serve as "Facilitator" for the ongoing peace talks between the Government of Burundi and the one remaining rebel group that has not put down its arms, the Palipehutu-FNL. While the two parties signed a Comprehensive Cease-fire Agreement in Dar es Salaam on September 7, the FNL has refused to return to Bujumbura and implementation remains on hold. South Africa currently has 865 troops serving as part of ONUB. These forces will likely remain in Burundi under an AU mandate after the UN mission ends, augmented by another 150 "VIP protectors," to guard the FNL leadership and support the demobilization and disarmament of the FNL fighters.

Zimbabwe

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¶24. (C) South Africa likely will attempt to keep Zimbabwe off the UN Security Council agenda. Zimbabwe continues to be one of South Africa's most difficult challenges. Senior South African officials are increasingly frustrated by President Mugabe's erratic rule, and we believe President Mbeki would like to see new leadership in Zimbabwe. South

Africa has tried a number of behind-the-scenes initiatives to spur change, including a proposed loan, negotiations on a compromise constitution, encouraging Mugabe's timely retirement, and intelligence operations. Yet, Pretoria has refused to criticize publicly the Mugabe regime, believing that "quiet diplomacy" and internal negotiations are the best ways to effect change. Unless the situation deteriorates to the point that there is widespread violence or outside troops are required to maintain stability, we believe South Africa will argue strongly against any UNSC action on Zimbabwe.

#### Haiti

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¶25. (S/NF) South Africa is likely to support the UN peacekeeping mission and reconstruction in Haiti, consistent with U.S. objectives. President Mbeki and FM Dlamini-Zuma initially had challenged the legality of Aristide's departure from Haiti. Pretoria accepted hosting President Aristide in May 2004. The SAG arranged for Aristide to hold press conferences in Pretoria, during which he railed against the United States and possibly sent coded messages to his supporters. South Africa also unhelpfully floated the idea of African Union "mediation" in Haiti.

¶26. (C) Since the February 2006 elections in Haiti, the tone of South Africa's policy has shifted significantly. President Mbeki congratulated President-elect Preval on February 18, said that the election reflected the will of the Haitian people, and stated South Africa's willingness to "assist the people of Haiti." Former President Aristide has been remarkably quiet since the elections, and we understand he is increasingly comfortable in Pretoria as a professor at the University of South Africa. South Africa is even considering providing bilateral assistance to Haiti in the areas of health and education.

#### Western Sahara

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¶27. (C) Because of their sympathies for the Saharawi cause, which Pretoria tellingly compares to the Palestinian "liberation struggle", South Africa likely will attempt to play a role on the Western Sahara question. South Africa is one of the few states to have recognized the "Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic" (in 2004), and relations between South Africa and Morocco remain tense. When accepting the credential of the Saharawi ambassador in December 2004, Mbeki said that "it is not correct for Morocco to continue to defy United Nations' decreed international positions by occupying Western Sahara."

#### Counterterrorism

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¶28. (S) South Africa is committed to combating terrorism and extremism around the world, including the illicit financial networks used by terrorist and criminal groups. Analysts and government officials are concerned about terrorism in the Horn of Africa. The SAG is conscientious about complying with relevant UN obligations. SAG law enforcement works closely but quietly with U.S. authorities on specific cases of concern. Nevertheless, Pretoria frequently disagrees with the U.S. on specific approaches and tactics, and is scrupulously compliant with South African law. The SAG remains concerned that UNSCR 1540 requirements infringe on member states' sovereignty and that developing countries simply do not have the capacity to fulfill the many complex reporting requirements imposed by the various sanctions and nonproliferation regimes. The U.S. counterterrorism message does not always resonate in South Africa. Many prominent ANC figures -- including Nelson Mandela -- remain on the official USG list of terrorists banned from travel to the States.

Ordinary South Africans oppose military involvement in Iraq and believe the GWOT has fueled extremism. We have seen increasing willingness to discuss counterterrorism issues in the domestic context as preparations to host the 2010 World Cup get into gear. South Africa will give practical support when it counts, but is unlikely to be a standard bearer in the war on terror.

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#### Everything Else

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¶29. (C) South Africa admittedly has little expertise on other issues before the Security Council, but is trying to bone up. The SAG will approach areas such as Afghanistan, Burma, Cyprus, Georgia/Abkhazia, Timor, and the Balkans on the merits, but will be deeply susceptible to the G-77 and/or NAM point of view. On USG priorities, it will be important to reach out to the SAG well in advance to educate the working levels and decision-makers and to communicate how our position supports South African, AU, or developing world interests.

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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¶30. (C) Engagement: We recommend high-level engagement with the South Africans on our UNSC and foreign policy priorities. In general, involving President Mbeki in key decisions will result in better outcomes for U.S. interests than leaving issues to the more ideological ForMin Dlamini-Zuma. South Africa perceives itself as a leader of Africa and the "South" and responds well to senior-level visits and meetings that reinforce the perception of its importance. In recent months, several key international leaders have visited South Africa, including Chinese Premier Wen (June), Russian President Putin (September), and Indian PM Singh (October). Mbeki publicly accepted Putin's offer to "mentor" South Africa on Security Council membership.

¶31. (C) Consult Early: We recommend early consultations with South African Government policymakers on UNSC issues. SAG decision-making is often laborious and involves multiple stakeholders. The sooner we can highlight issues and provide timely information, the more likely we are to bring Pretoria's position in line with our own. The monthly DFA-P5 meetings in Pretoria (reftel) and DFA's regular consultations with G-8 Embassies are an excellent opportunity to flag potential issues and develop consensus. Last-minute demarches on complex issues are more likely to result in knee-jerk, "pro-South" positions.

¶32. (S/NF) Provide Information: South Africa's Department of Foreign Affairs is undergoing significant transformation and often lacks the capacity to provide timely and accurate information to senior policymakers. The system of reporting between South African embassies and Pretoria often does not work effectively, particularly in the classified arena. Providing background papers and briefing to policymakers and substantive experts, including increased intelligence sharing as appropriate, will help South Africa develop more informed and nuanced positions.

¶33. (C) Underscore Common Interests: Many SAG policymakers, even at senior levels, do not appreciate the strong support that exists within the USG for many of their African priorities. We should seek opportunities to inform SAG officials about the U.S. support for the African Union, NEPAD, SADC, as well as increases in development assistance to Africa.

¶34. (C) Emphasize Multilateralism, Fairness, and Balance: South Africa consistently stresses the importance of

"multilateralism," often contrasting this approach with its perception that certain countries (read: the U.S) are "unilateralists" who pursue their own short-term national interests at the expense of the developing world and the greater good. The more we can package our policy in multilateral terms and emphasize the principles of fairness and balance underlying our policy arguments, the more effective we will be in convincing Pretoria to support U.S. objectives.

BOST